

Claims:

1. A network of computers comprising:

5 a plurality of individual computer devices each having a non-volatile data storage device and each having means (305) for communicating with at least one other one of said plurality of computers;

10 each said non-volatile data storage device being divided into a first data storage area reserved for use by the corresponding computer device, and a second data storage area reserved for backup storage of data contained in at least one said first data storage area of at least one other said non-volatile data storage device;

15 a data protection component for providing data protection for user data stored on each of the non-volatile data storage devices by storing the user data which is resident within the said first data storage area of each non-volatile data storage device, in one or a plurality of said second data storage areas of other said non-volatile data storage devices.

20 2. The network of computers as claimed in claim 1, comprising a set-up component for defining said data storage devices into a data protection group in which data from each of the plurality of data storage devices in the group are distributed amongst the plurality of data storage devices in the group.

25 3. The network of computers as claimed in claim 1, comprising:

a sizer configured for selecting a size of a first and a second data storage area of each of said plurality of non-volatile data storage devices.

30 4. The network of computers as claimed in claim 1, further comprising a finder for finding a plurality of non volatile data storage devices.

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Abstract**UTILIZATION OF UNUSED DISK SPACE ON NETWORKED COMPUTERS**

5 A plurality of computers in a network (503-505) each have a processor and a non-volatile data storage device (500-502) such as a hard disk, a raid array, or the like. Each data storage device is divided into a first data storage area (203-205) and a second data storage area (509-511). The first data storage area is reserved for use by at least one processor to which it is assigned, whereas the
10 second data storage area is hidden from use by the file system of the computer, and is used to store replicated data of other ones of the plurality of computer entities. In the event of failure of any one of the data storage devices, data can be recovered from the second data storage areas of the other data storage devices.

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